



MDC Resource Science

Missouri Riders: Results From a Survey of Equestrians



Science Notes

Missouri Riders: Results From a Survey of Equestrians

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Information Needs: Public land managers need to know what equestrian trail users want and what they would accept regarding trail development and maintenance, facility needs, and conflict management with other types of users. Managers also need more information about the riders, how often they ride, and what they require for a quality recreational experience.

Contacting Riders

Many kinds of users compete for Missouri's public trails and managers are challenged to balance human users' needs with those of wildlife. To improve our knowledge of Missouri's equestrians, their preferences, and habits, the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) conducted a scientific survey of over 5,000 randomly selected horse owners in Missouri between February and June, 2008. The response rate (after removing invalid addresses) was 48.1% (2,286/4,750).

Survey Results

- Missourians took a total of 181,500 riding trips on public land in 2007. These included over 68,000 trips at MDC areas (38% of the total).
- Sixty percent of equestrian trail users indicated they would be willing to help maintain trails.
- Five MDC areas were in the top 10 most heavily used riding areas in 2007, with the US Forest Service (USFS) managing the most used area (Fig. 1).
- Total spending on trips is estimated at \$27 million (with a total economic impact of \$48 million).
- About 38% of riders rode on public lands in 2007.
- The average ride was about a half day.
- The availability of water for horses and parking were the most important factors when survey respondents were deciding where to ride (Fig. 2).
- Respondents felt that ATVs (but not hikers) caused problems for horses.
- Respondents wanted more trails, better signage, and consistent policies and rules.

Fig. 1: Top Ten Areas —2007

Area	Est. Trips in 2007	Spent in 2007
Big Piney Trail - —Houston-Rolla (USFS)	8,801.15	\$3,007,891.63
Shawnee Trail - —Ozark NSR (NPS)	5,826.48	\$2,656,852.57
Busiek SF & WA (MDC)	5,595.67	\$615,323.49
Big Sugar Trail - —Cuivre River State Park (DNR)	5,399.61	\$424,334.71
Robert E. Talbot CA (MDC)	4,361.16	\$224,572.38
McAdoo Trail - —Knob Noster State Park (DNR)	4,228.16	\$413,889.73
Compton Hollow CA (MDC)	4,084.23	\$174,260.40
Rudolf Bennitt CA (MDC)	4,023.65	\$638,503.24
Lead Mine CA (MDC)	3,872.65	\$454,461.22
Smithville Lake (COE)	3,825.86	\$380,068.69

For more information, contact:

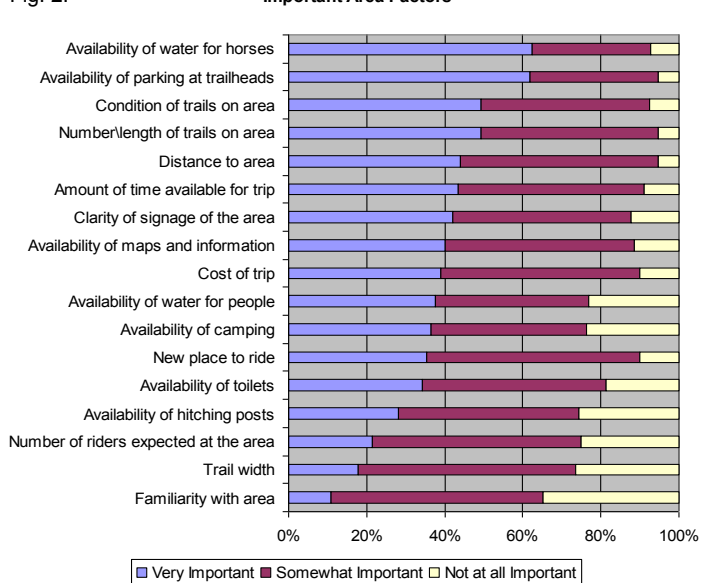
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Based on previous GIS and engineering work we also know that:

- 42 MDC areas offer 421.5 miles of designated equestrian trail.
- 15 Missouri State Parks (DNR) have equestrian usage.
- Mark Twain National Forest (USFS) offers over 530 miles of trail for equestrian use and allows horseback riding on roads and cross-country.
- Ozark National Scenic Riverway has over 25 miles of equestrian trails.
- Trail construction costs can range from \$14,520 per mile for gravel, \$17,160 to \$21,120 per mile for geotextiles, and up to \$79,200 per mile for geocells. Trail maintenance ranges from \$72 to over \$1,000 per mile per year.

Fig. 2:

Important Area Factors



Conclusions

- Agencies should provide good, consistent signage from the brochure to the trail.
- Agencies should provide good maintenance for safe, welcoming trail conditions.
- Agencies need to maintain good cooperation with each other to minimize expense and duplication.
- Enforce agency policies and explain reasoning behind decisions.
- If agencies do not have the resources to maintain them in a safe condition, close some trails. In this case, the worst, most expensive and/or least used trails need to be considered.

Keywords: trails, public use, surveys, horses, questionnaires